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ABSTRACT

This report examines community attitudes about the schools and the extent of community involvement in the schools today. It discusses the role most traditional parent organizations have played and are playing in changing the schools. The report looks at the talent potential in the community at the local level and the crucial role the superintendent could play in helping to utilize that potential. The use of volunteers in schools is also considered. The technical facilities of business and industry are considered for potential use in vocational education. The report concludes with a summary and some recommendations on how the school and community could work together more effectively. (DN)

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IDEA

TOWARD MORE EFFECTIVE INVOLVEMENT OF THE COMMUNITY IN THE SCHOOL

AN OCCASIONAL PAPER

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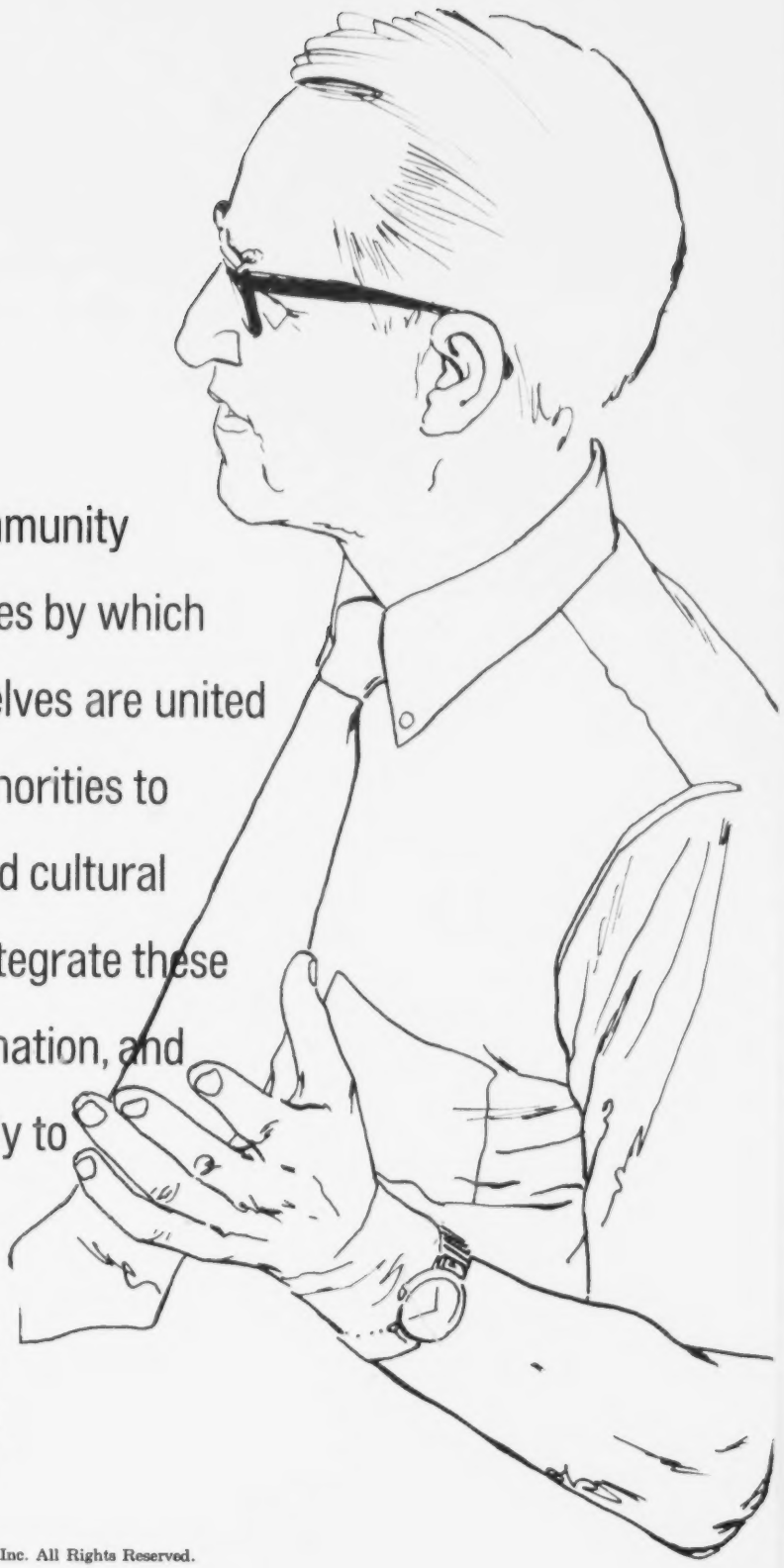

The United Nations defines Community Development as "... the processes by which the efforts of the people themselves are united with those of governmental authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of communities, to integrate these communities into the life of the nation, and to enable them to contribute fully to national progress."

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TOWARD MORE EFFECTIVE INVOLVEMENT OF THE COMMUNITY IN THE SCHOOL

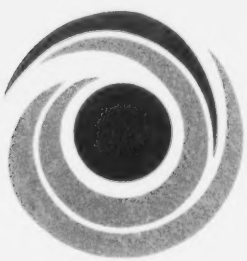

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

From Griping about to Grappling with Citizen Involvement 4
Involvement of the Community in the Public Schools:
Where Is It Today? 5
Thwarting Citizen Involvement 13
Parental Involvement? 14
Talent Potential at the Local Level 15
Nonthreatening Intervention via School Volunteers 17
Businessmen and Industrialists in Education — The
Friendly Giants 18
Producing Better Bakers and Candlestick Makers 20
Getting to Causes by Treating Symptoms 22
Taking Lessons from an Underdeveloped Country
and a Few Government Programs 23
Summary of Recommendations 24

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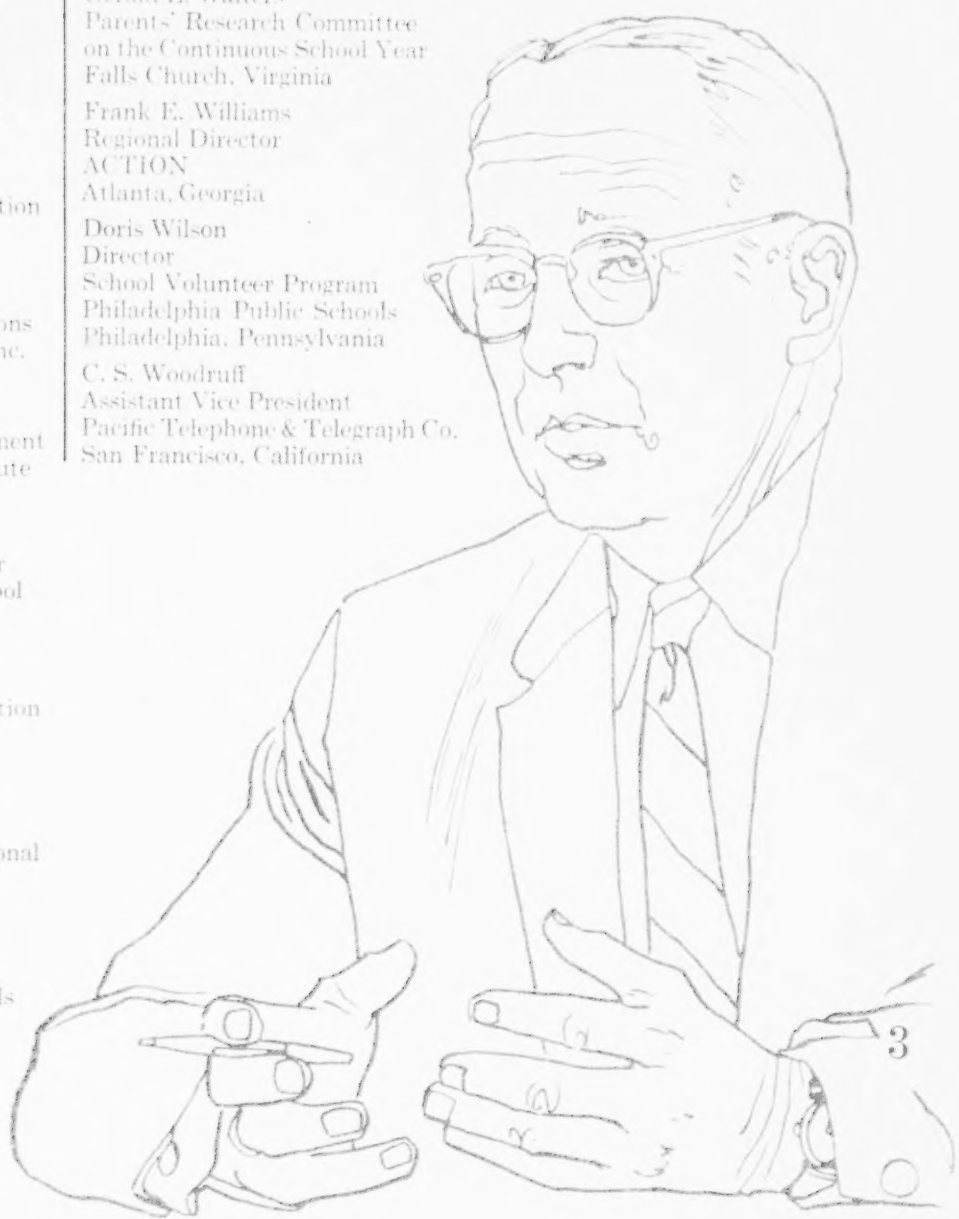
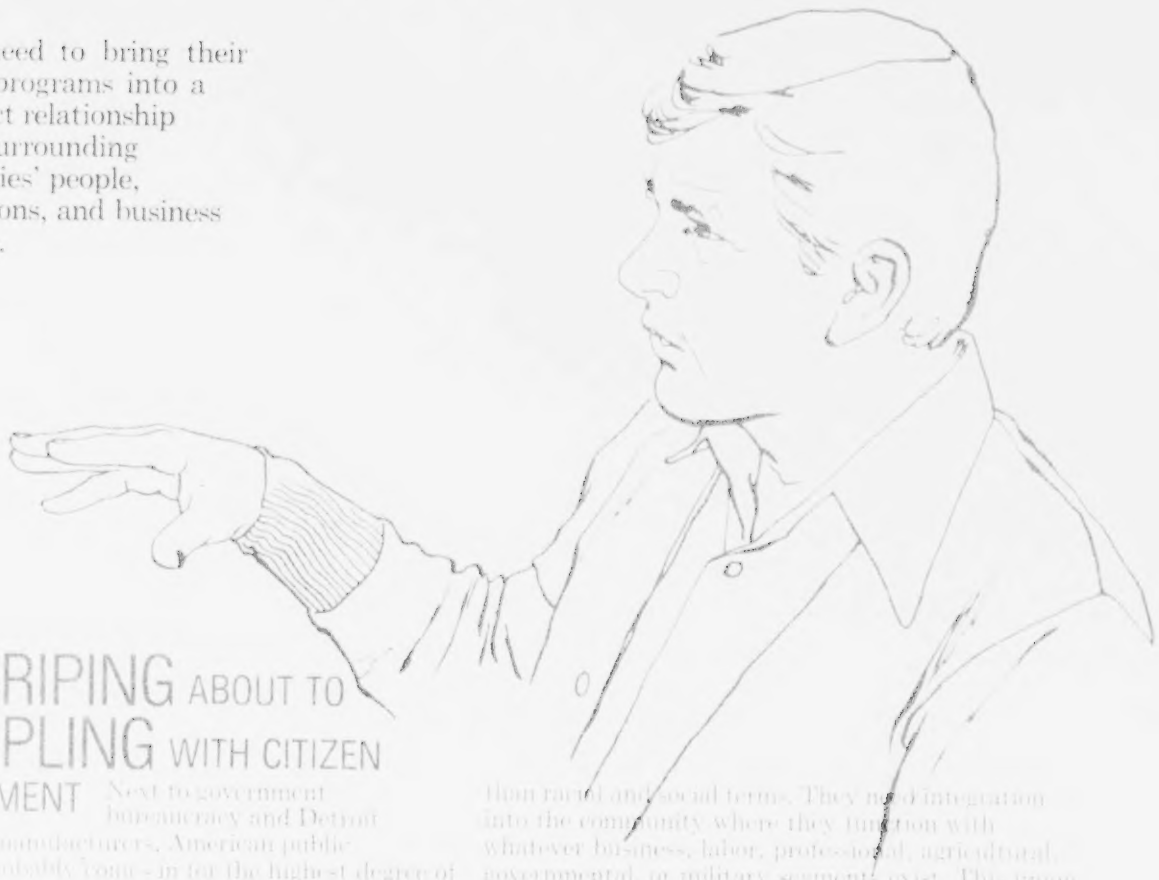


Schools need to bring their teaching programs into a more direct relationship with the surrounding communities' people, organizations, and business economies.



FROM GRIPING ABOUT TO GRAPPLING WITH CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT

Next to government bureaucracy and Detroit automobile manufacturers, American public education probably comes in for the highest degree of sustained criticism by the general public. Educators and their schools are being challenged as never before on solutions to newly emerging problems resulting from technological and sociological changes. If educators expect to meet and solve these problems, they must find new ways to make contact with the communities they serve. Even more important is the fact that such new contacts must be conscientious, constructive, and continuing.

Schools need to bring their teaching programs into a more direct relationship with the surrounding communities' people, organizations, and business economies.

Despite many valiant efforts, the schools remain largely aloof and dissociated from the communities that support them. Indeed, the fences that surround most schools seem to have become veritable lines of demarcation between subject discipline and community reality. This happens in spite of the fact that students learn best when lessons develop from the things they can see in their immediate surroundings.

Technical and scientific improvements and social forces are continuously changing every community's complexion. School personnel must work more closely with the people in their communities if they are to keep pace with the changes taking place in society. One way of doing this is by going to the community with and for information.

The public is no longer willing to limit its involvement in public schools to financial support vis-à-vis tax dollars. Schools need integration in more than racial and social terms. They need integration into the community where they function with whatever business, labor, professional, agricultural, governmental, or military segments exist. This union of school and community must become a reality if education is to continue as a potent force in the amelioration of man's societal problems.

A knowledge of one's own community provides the basis for better understanding of problems. Yet a survey of the use of Title I funds conducted by the Washington Research Project and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Legal Defense Fund for the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare disclosed that schools universally failed to include poor people and the representatives of their organizations in the planning and designing of programs enacted under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

It is well established that extremist groups have been far more influential in determining schools' programs than the numerical majority of parents using those same schools. Yet, the average parent seems convinced that he cannot scale the bureaucratic walls of the school administration.

A Stanford University study conducted in 1960 revealed that most parents do not consider the schools to be the place for them to voice their beliefs with any assurance they will be heard. Instead, the near universal belief among parents is that the ballot box is the only place for them to effect educational change. This report found that parents are convinced they can do little to change school programs. Most parents reportedly doubt that school administrators even care what the local gentry says or thinks.

INVOLVEMENT OF THE COMMUNITY IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS: WHERE IS IT TODAY?

A Position Statement by Samuel M. Burt

Introduction — For purposes of this position statement, community involvement and citizen participation in public schools are defined as including those activities and services provided voluntarily on a part-time basis usually, but not necessarily, without reimbursement for expenses or an honorarium. Additionally, these activities and services:

- help maintain close working relations between citizens and school officials in the development of public education and school policies, goals, priorities, and programs
- assure responsiveness of the educational system to the needs and wishes of those whom it serves — including students, parents, industry, business, community, and nation
- provide opportunities for lay people, community organizations, and institutions of the community to help implement school policy so as to improve, enrich, expand, and equalize educational opportunities for all students

While school board membership is among the most important activities which could be discussed under the above definition, there is sufficient literature on this subject to permit its exclusion from this paper. Also, the reader's acceptance of the principle that active, sustained participation of citizens in public schools is essential to the maintenance and growth of our pluralistic, democratic society is taken for granted.

Hardly a textbook concerning public education or a school superintendent's speech to a civic organization neglects to pay homage to the past, present, and future role and need for citizen and community group

Where school systems have made the effort to involve their community people and other resources, marked improvement, enrichment and expansion of programs, and equalization of educational opportunities are evident.

Appointment of [illegible] number of ad hoc study groups, vilification of the groups' leaders, refusal to meet with such groups, and simply ignoring their existence are among the artful to highly sophisticated strategies and tactics available to administrators.

involvement" in our public schools. If the practice was as stirring and pervasive as the rhetoric, the schools would be the most relevant, responsive, and respected of the nation's public institutions.

That public schools *do* not enjoy such a reputation, and that community involvement in schools is not the norm is well recognized. That a direct relationship might exist between these two facts is admitted by few school administrators. Yet, where school systems have made the effort to involve their community people and other resources, marked improvement, enrichment and expansion of programs, and equalization of educational opportunities are evident. Case studies to this effect occasionally are made available from such diverse sources as the *Saturday Review*, The U. S. Chamber of Commerce, The National Association of Manufacturers, and The National Education Association.

Then why the glaring gap between the glowing oratory of educators concerning community involvement and the practice in most school systems? Part of the explanation must certainly rest in the fact that as the professionalization of public education and public school administration has grown, school officials have found it less and less convenient and more and more time consuming to adhere to the principle that the public schools are public, belong to the public, and are to be conducted in the interest of the entire public.

Educators and school administrators are to blame for the generally prevailing current lack of effective citizen participation and involvement in the schools because, as professionals, they have the responsibility for providing the necessary receptive climate as well as leadership for community participation. Where such climate and leadership exist in the schools, a high degree of involvement can be seen. Where school superintendents and principals are apathetic to, disinterested in, or critical of citizens' participation, involvement is nil in spite of how strongly the citizenry may feel about conditions in the schools.

I cannot sympathize with the school superintendent who wrote to me in answer to an inquiry concerning his plans for establishing a citizens' advisory committee that, "I have so many self-appointed citizens' committees annoying me now that to appoint another one would be like hitting myself over the head with a hammer."

If this superintendent were exercising the proper degree of leadership, he would have appointed a committee to resolve the problems which have sufficiently aroused enough citizens to form their own committees. By taking no action he is hitting himself over the head with a lot of hammers!

However, it is easy to understand the suspicion and antagonism that school administrators exhibit, for example, when self-appointed citizens' committees want to:

- discontinue the use of certain textbooks or introduce new ones of questionable value
- cut school costs by discontinuing what they consider "educational frills"
- dismiss a teacher or principal without cause
- segregate or desegregate the school system under some unworkable and/or illegal plan
- have a school built or not built in a particular neighborhood
- have a voice in the daily operation and administration of a school or the entire school system
- initiate a new "progressive" program or discontinue one previously started
- decentralize the school system so they can take over control of the schools in their neighborhood

No wonder many a school administrator dislikes, on sight, any group of lay people insisting that he meet with them. Nevertheless, this is part of the job, and the administrator must cope with the problem.

[1] For the kinds of services provided schools by citizen and community groups which come under the rubric of "community involvement," see: Samuel M. Burt and Leon M. Lessinger, *Voluntary Industry Involvement in Public Education*, Appendixes 1, 2, 5, and 6 (Lexington, Mass., D. C. Heath & Co., 1970). Also see, Samuel M. Burt, *Strengthening Volunteer Industry Services to Public Education*, Chap. 1 (Kalamazoo, Mich., The W. E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, 1971).

Unfortunately, too many administrators have developed an arsenal of strategies to support and enforce the phenomenon of "educator's xenophobia," the fear of strangers in the schools. Appointment of an endless number of ad hoc study groups, vilification of the groups' leaders, refusal to meet with such groups, and simply ignoring their existence are among the artful to highly sophisticated strategies and tactics available to administrators. Luvern L. Cunningham, dean of the College of Education at Ohio State University, in reporting on a 13-city study for the Urban Coalition of emerging new forms of citizen participation in schools, stated, "The irrationality, the hostility, the aggressiveness, and the violence which accompany some acts of 'participation' are usually born out of despair. The educational enterprise is fantastically self-protective. It has so many built-in protective mechanisms that those who seek to penetrate or even dent its calloused exterior find it necessary to employ harsh and violent means."[5]

What about citizens' groups sponsored and organized by school administrators? When such events occur, there is usually much public fanfare in the media. The deliberations and recommendations of the group are duly noted and frequently published in full. Those recommendations with which the administration agrees are, of course, put into effect in the schools. Those that do not meet with approval go into oblivion. More frequently than not, the public receives no indication of action on any recommendations. Such actions or inactions by school administrators take place not because these are mean and miserable individuals unmindful of their responsibilities to the public, but rather because they lack the time and staff to devote to working appropriately with citizens and community organizations interested in school matters. For example, in interviewing a school superintendent whose doctoral dissertation had been written on community involvement, I expected to find a high degree of citizen participation in his school district. Instead, he informed me that he was so busy with things which had to be done daily, he did not have time to do the things that should be done. Even where an administrator has an interest in involving citizens in the schools, he rarely gets around to it.

The resulting public attitude does not distinguish between the xenophobic administrator and the administrator who really wants community involvement. The citizens simply become frustrated and cynical about their ability to have an impact on their public schools. The final effect is either adoption of an apathetic attitude toward any overtures by school administrators, or the use of confrontation tactics to decentralize local educational agencies and provide for the ultimate anathema to school administrators — community control of schools.

Interested citizens cannot be blamed for either becoming apathetic or obstreperous. School administrators are charged with the responsibility for causing these attitudes through their inability, for whatever reason, to provide meaningful and continuing channels for cooperative effort of interested citizens' groups who want to become involved in serving their public schools. Frequently, even boards of education complain about "lack of working relationships" with school administrators. As a further result of ineffective leadership on the part of school administrators in promoting community involvement, current events are shaping the form of citizen participation in public education with foreboding implications for the future of voluntaryism in the schools.

Community Involvement Required by Law

Traditionally, community involvement has been in the form of volunteer participation and service. Because of the dissatisfaction of so many community groups with the opportunities afforded them for such service, Congress recently passed legislation mandating the utilization of volunteer citizens' groups by local and state school officials in the administration of federally-funded educational programs.[6] Such laws are as meaningful as legislating happy marriages! It is significant, however, that Congress considers community involvement in schools important enough to legislate its utilization.

The 1968 Amendments to the Vocational Education Act of 1963 were the first federal educational legislation requiring the establishment of a President-appointed National Advisory Council on Vocational Education, and governor-appointed state advisory councils. In previous years, all states had either legislated or issued regulations requiring the appointment of local advisory committees for vocational education programs. It is estimated that some 100,000 business, industry, professional, and labor organization people serve on these local committees. While it is true that many of the committees exist more in name than action, they were organized by the schools and the members did agree to serve. Since the members represent the business and industry interests of their communities, one would expect a considerable outcry if and when they found themselves inappropriately utilized or not used at all. Actually, this seldom happens. More often than not, they lose interest in the schools and become involved in other public service activities.

[5]Luvern L. Cunningham, "Community Involvement in Change," Educational Leadership, XXVII, (January 1970), pp. 363-66.

[6]See, Samuel M. Burt, *Strengthening Volunteer Industry Service to Public Education*, (Kalamazoo, Mich.: The W. E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, 1971).

National and Regional Organizations and the Federal Government

— Several years ago the U. S. Office of Education established the Office of Coordinator for Citizen Participation. A national meeting of business people and educators was held and a report issued, as was a news bulletin, regarding volunteer aides. This office was abolished in 1971 in favor of having the various organizational units of the Office of Education handle matters dealing with citizen involvement. For example, the Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education has assigned a staff member to be concerned with Title I Parent Advisory Committees. There is some indication that the Office is looking to the new federal agency, ACTION, to promote such activity throughout the nation.

Late in 1971, the Commissioner of Education appointed a Federal Coordinator for Industry, Education, and Labor. This Coordinator hopes to persuade state departments of education to follow the lead of the Office of Education and three states in appointing state coordinators for industry-education cooperation. He will work primarily through this staff in encouraging local educational agencies to involve business, industry, and labor people in their schools.

Currently, available publications deal almost entirely with business and industry and include a pamphlet of the American Vocational Association, a pamphlet of the American Association of Junior Colleges, a report from ERIC, and four monographs and two books published under the auspices of the W. E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research. Other published literature consists of occasional articles in professional journals, popular magazines, and chapters in textbooks written for public-school-administration students and practitioners. Materials in the format of case studies are available from the U. S. Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Manufacturers, the National School Public Relations Association of the National Education Association, and the National Center for Voluntary Action.

The Congress of Parents and Teachers provides a check list of services which parents can provide to schools as aides and volunteer workers. The National School Volunteer Program has developed a short training program for volunteers working in inner-city schools. A number of school systems are using this

training material.

The National Committee for the Support of Public Schools with the assistance of several "war on poverty" and civil liberties' groups including the U. S. Department of Justice's Division of Community Affairs has embarked on a program of conducting training workshops for Parent Advisory Committees. With a limited staff and no funds, it is doubtful that much can be done beyond an occasional workshop for a few Parent Advisory Committees in a restricted geographical area. With 16,000 Parent Advisory Committees in urgent need of guidance in dealing with school problems and school people, the National Committee's program of workshops, assuming it is part of the answer, needs to be expanded at an exponential rate.

The Southern California Industry-Education Council and its counterparts in Northern California, Central California, Arizona, and Northern New Jersey have done much to bring businessmen and educators together in meaningful dialogue. These groups have organized a number of cooperative activities designed to improve public school management and programs. Leaders of these organizations are trying to establish a national program of regional industry-education councils. However, without money or staff, they are meeting with no success. The National Association for Industry-Education Cooperation is presently a moribund organization held together by dedicated industry and business representatives interested in school improvement. It does have fine potential if funds can be obtained for staff and a program modeled after the California regional councils. Most of the money that is available for the national and regional groups, little as it is, comes from business and industry.

The only known major effort of a national organization to promote community involvement in public schools is the Ford Foundation-funded project of the Oakland Unified School District. Ford has provided $127,000 in partial support of this program which included 180 adult and student representatives, 50 representatives of city organizations and agencies, and 50 local specialists such as architects and accountants. But it is too soon to assess the results of this project.

At the state level, many states have issued guideline material for local vocational education advisory committees, but most of this material is more confusing than enlightening.[5]

What is depressing about this spotty record of leadership from federal agencies and national citizen organizations is the conclusion reached by a 1970 U. S.

[5]Samuel M. Burt, *Industry and Vocational-Technical Education*, (N.Y.C.: McGraw Hill Book Co. 1967).

Community Control of Schools — Decentralization of large school systems so as to provide for school districts under the "control" of neighborhood or community boards received its major impetus in New York City. Most educators remember the furor this movement created with charges and countercharges by neighborhood groups, teachers, principals, teacher collective bargaining units, and politicians. Looking back on those days, it is fair to say the decentralization effort initially was poorly conceived, planned, and implemented. Annie Stein, writing in the *Harvard Educational Review*, even charges the New York City Board of Education and its top officials with engaging in strategies and tactics to assure failure of the program.[1] A recent article in *Commentary*, in pointing out that the children of the Ocean Hill-Brownsville district cannot read as well today as they did five years ago, concludes that community control of schools has failed in New York City.[2]

Educators need a great deal more information about what has taken place as well as what the result has been in New York City, Detroit, Los Angeles, and Philadelphia before anyone can make a judgment about failure or success. Reading scores alone are not a sufficient criterion one way or the other. Even if the Ocean Hill-Brownsville effort is judged a failure, Louisville, Kentucky is a success story.

The superintendent of schools in Louisville started neighborhood school boards in 1971. The boards are composed of teachers, parents, and administrators who have the responsibility (as far as legally possible) for running their schools. Five workshops were held by school administrators for the members of these boards so as to prepare them for their responsibilities. One of the superintendent's top assistants was assigned to work with the boards. The director of research for the school system provides each board with monthly data on accomplishment of specific behavioral goals established by each board including academic achievement, vandalism, and dropouts.

Certainly one of the lessons that can be learned from Louisville's experience is that with a commitment from the school superintendent and his staff, assignment of staff, and organization of appropriate training programs, community involvement can be beneficial to public schools. It also demonstrates a fact of modern American society. To wit, those people who expect more from life are willing to engage in greater meaningful involvement in life. To most Americans, education and schooling are part and parcel of life. Given the opportunity for meaningful involvement in the schools, they will do so in large numbers.

Some Community Involvement Training Programs — Growing recognition that citizens must be prepared for involvement in public education is leading to the development of training programs for community involvement. During the past year, the Center for Urban Education in New York City, one of the regional research centers funded almost entirely by the U. S. Office of Education, has developed multimedia material for experimental use in workshops conducted by the Center for parents and community groups involved in governance of the New York City decentralized school district. The Center also conducts a workshop in community leadership development for selected individuals. It is expected that this material will be made available in the near future for use by U. S. Office of Education research centers and educational laboratories in other areas of the nation.

The Rurban Educational Development Laboratory of the University of Illinois (Urbana) has developed a detailed course of study designed to assist in the improvement of the quality of citizen participation in local advisory councils and committees. The course includes such topics as the nature of citizen advisory councils; organizational structure and authority; formation procedures; and internal operations, activities, and practices. The course of study is presented in the form of lesson plans for the use of an instructor.

Under an Administration of Aging grant in 1967, a team of educators and volunteers from Winnetka, Illinois began assisting a number of surrounding communities and schools of varying socio-economic patterns to develop school volunteer programs using large numbers of older adults. The methods employed to share the Winnetka school volunteer pattern were basically demonstration, training, and visitations, utilizing visual aids, and seminar techniques. The coordinator for this program, Janet W. Freund, produced a "Guide for Coordinators of Volunteers and Volunteer Services in the Schools" (ERIC Document 031447, 1968) which is, in effect, a training manual for coordinators of volunteer programs in the public schools.

The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, Portland, Oregon, is another U. S. Office of Education-funded regional research and educational laboratory organization. Among the activities in which its staff is engaged is a project titled Community Oriented Change Process for rural communities. The objective is to increase school-community cooperation in creating self-renewing institutions, with the improvement of local educational systems.

[1] Annie Stein, "Strategies for Failure," *Harvard Educational Review*, May 1971.

[2] Diane Ravitz, "Community Control Revisited," *Commentary*, February 1972.

If the public schools are not going to utilize volunteer services at all, it is quite likely they will need far more tax monies than are being collected at the present time.

Utilization of Volunteers in Schools

While it is perfectly understandable and reasonable that a combination of volunteer and paid aides be used by a school system, many administrators feel they cannot depend on volunteers to maintain a schedule. If the public schools are not going to utilize volunteer services at all, it is quite likely they will need far more tax monies than are being collected at the present time.

In terms of dollar value of such services, one school system planning to use paid teacher assistants, estimated the cost at $800,000 for the 1969-70 school year.[7] Many of the duties of these paid teacher assistants are being performed in other school systems by volunteer library, lunchroom, teacher, and other educational program aides. For example, another school system reported that more than 3,000 volunteers contributed 95,732 hours assisting in the schools during 1968-69. This contributed time is roughly equivalent to 70 full-time staff members who would have cost the school system a minimum of $500,000 for the year.[8]

[7] *Chores for our Children: A Budget Discussion Guide*, Montgomery County Public Schools, Rockville, Md., September 1968 (p. 20).

[8] *Direction*, Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools, Cleveland, Ohio, 1969.

Considerable debate has ensued between school officials and "poor people's organizations" as to whether or not parents should be paid as aides. The organizations claim that many poor people need the income, small as it might be, for their work in schools as aides. Many educators do not relish the assumption of responsibility for or welcome the thought of having nonprofessionals in the schools. A combination of these attitudes may militate against the utilization of volunteer services by many schools regardless of how much concerned citizens want to serve their educational systems as volunteers. Certainly, where poor people will insist on being paid for their services, school administrators unwilling to utilize volunteer services will find such insistence an admirable rationalization for not utilizing volunteers at all.

Conclusion— Community involvement in the public schools today is still more a matter of high-flown oratory than actual practice in a great majority of this nation's school systems. If we are to move from rhetoric to practices that will assure effective and meaningful citizen participation leading to improvement and enrichment of school programs, funds must be made available from government, foundations, and socially concerned business leaders to put promising programs into wider use.

THWARTING CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT

"The superintendent and the board of education really do not want involvement and this is part of the problem. Who are these people to say that the parents of the community cannot get involved in their own schools!" a participant demanded. Basically, communications between the schools and parents are ineffective. The group felt that generally, parents do not really know about the needs of the educational system and that a lack of confidence exists between parents and most schools. Some of these same barriers exist between businessmen and schoolmen for many of the same reasons.

A crucial observation advanced by this group was that a lack of knowledge exists on the part of people inside the educational establishment regarding the potential of the community as a contributor to schools' programs. Often, what is known is seen as a threat instead of something of positive value. The influence of external forces in the schools is seen as upsetting the accustomed routine and as requiring the teacher to do something quite different to accommodate that influence.

Through administrative manipulation by people in the schools, most traditional parent organizations have lost the effectiveness they might have had as agencies that can help in changing the schools. In the words of one seminar member, "These groups have been used in some communities as a means of discouraging involvement of anybody other than those whom the principal or superintendent controls through such associations." Unfortunately, this is the image these parent organizations are getting around the country.

Due to their assumption of a supportive rather than directive role within the educational framework, the effectiveness of the traditional parent groups has been challenged by the more active citizenry. This is one reason why such organizations have not been acceptable to ghetto residents where school administrative policies rarely meet the needs as perceived by the local citizenry.

However, this passive role may be on the wane. Following the seminar, the Parent-Teacher Association passed a resolution at its national convention favoring busing to reduce racial isolation and dropped its policy of noninterference in school administration and control of policy. The impact of this PTA aggressiveness will depend on the local chapters and how they respond to the new policy.

Educational vernacular and semantics were seen as a barrier to effective communications with outside groups. Jealousy of prerogatives was mentioned. A great deal of concern was voiced about role confusion inside the instruction, the increasing specialization of education, and the organizational structure itself which was described as "poorly defined."

Solutions to the above-stated problems should be the product of interaction between all groups concerned. "You do not try to do something from the top down but from the bottom up," one individual quipped. It was advanced that often external groups get involved in the process without having the facts. They do not really understand what processes are available through which they can attack the problem. A great deal of in-house confusion is evident about all the popular programs and jargon that now permeate the educational scene.

Somehow educators are expected to accommodate such innovations as individual instruction, differentiated staffing, team teaching, humanizing instruction, student involvement, interdisciplinary instruction, and learning centers. Teacher training really does not exist in sufficient depth today to acquaint people in education with what all these things involve.

In order to overcome the roadblocks to involvement, opportunities must be made available for dialogue in order to learn about mutual goals, to learn to listen, to identify what can be attempted, and to accept an attitude of willingness to try. Only then can mistrust be overcome. The proprietary feeling every group has that it does not want to be encroached upon is another thing that can profitably be handled best through dialogue. This can develop credibility with

Through administrative manipulation by people in the schools, most traditional parent organizations have lost the effectiveness they might have had as agencies that can help in changing the schools.

Even if one could completely wipe out racism and poverty within education, some serious disorders would still remain in the whole educational structure regardless of whatever level one examined.

the recognition that no attempt is being made to encroach and that work is available for everybody to do. In the field of education there is more than enough work for everyone to do, so encroachment should not be a concern. The call should be "We need all the help we can get!" In the educational process, if people can understand that everybody is needed in this process, it may reduce the proprietary attitude.

What is needed is the recognition of a broader definition of education with the identification of roles of the various segments of the community and an understanding of the interaction of these roles. The opposition to change can be dealt with through an informational program starting with the head of state and including the delineation of problems with possible solutions (not panaceas) and alternative programs. Change is a factor of life; therefore, it is a factor of education.

"What is needed is for the highest office in this land to put some true spotlight on the crisis within education that a lot of us talk about but are not willing to face up to," a participant stated. "Even if one could completely wipe out racism and poverty within education, some serious disorders would still remain in the whole educational structure regardless of whatever level one examined. Remaining would be those bright youngsters on the outside looking in with no desire to come inside. A spotlight on these crises is needed as a first step, leading then to an honest search for solutions, with attempts to involve everybody in that solution seeking and application. It should be recognized that all of the answers are not within the educational profession. However, educators must be a part of the solution-seeking effort. All of the answers are not within the poverty and minority groups, but they too must be a part and have a meaningful role in solution seeking."

Increasingly, many of the difficulties facing education are being seen as symptoms of social and economic changes that challenge the entire fabric of society and require greater attention than the educational profession alone can provide. "I can see in television a horrible kind of impact on society in that it has made us immune to the things at which we ought to be horrified," one individual astutely observed. "For example, you can enjoy war any weekday evening on the six o'clock news. You can watch political figures assassinated and buried on this screen in the comfort of your living room complete with beer and popcorn. The point is that this type of activity no longer bothers the majority of the American public. This kind of influence has tended to make us even less likely to want to become involved. In most big cities, if a person decides that he wants to become involved and attends a community meeting, it is likely that his car will be stripped while he is inside or he will be mugged when he comes out! This, of course, is another barrier to wanting to be involved."

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT?

Below is a letter that a member of the seminar shared with the group. This letter was sent home with elementary children on the opening day of school in a middle-class suburb of a major eastern city.

Dear Parents,

Welcome! We are glad to have your child on Team W.

Please send $3.00 for supplies such as crayons, paper, pencils, notebooks, etc. with your child tomorrow.

Also, because supply funds have been cut from the county, we would appreciate your child bringing at sometime during the year a roll of toilet tissues, a roll of paper towels, a bar of soap, and a box of facial tissues.

Thank you. We are looking forward to a productive school year.

TALENT POTENTIAL AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

"We need to start the process of school-community coalition for education," a discussant declared. A study of the costs of such social failures as juvenile delinquents, alcoholics, and criminals is one way of bringing this need to the attention of the nation. "Quantified estimates of where we will be on such costs in 1980 and 1985 would provide an 'attention getter' which is now lacking for the 'have' elements of our society." Self-interest continues to be perhaps the most powerful motivator of human behavior. Such self-interest would come into much clearer focus if policy leaders could have qualified data of comparative costs for such public expenditures in the future as welfare, law enforcement, crime, drugs, and education.

In spite of these needed actions, the group still placed the primary responsibility for community involvement with school administrators. They were termed the primary catalysts to any collaborative action. In spite of all the laments about needs in education and insufficient funds, the group contended that staff money is available in any educational system with over 5,000 students to fund a job this important even if it is necessary to eliminate a director of something.

"It does seem to me that education has a tremendous amount of influential power available that it can wield in this area," a businessman stated. An educator flatly agreed. "The school superintendent, if he is responsive to the local community or has an attitude of openness, can get all the help he wants. People just do not turn down the school superintendent when he is asking for help for children."

One participant reported on a study conducted by the American Association of School Administrators as to "Why superintendents fail." They came up with the fact that some 60% of the superintendents fail because they are not involved in the community and its affairs. Involvement, in the past, has usually meant that the superintendent was a member of the local civic club and a deacon in the church. But the concept being discussed now is really quite different because it means involving the whole school system and extending it out into the community.

If the school superintendent in a large school district will identify the concerns and ask the power structure in his district to do the planning, he will get the help he needs. The climate has never been better for this kind of involvement. The societal chemistry is right for someone to take the lead in citizen and community involvement. "One of the answers is to use every means at our command in the educational fraternity to make the educational establishment the change agent before industry, government, or some ad hoc committee takes the initiative in forming a coalition. Many times in the past, a coalition has failed because its goals were so grandiose that it tried to be all things to all people."

"From my experience, I would say that if you do not have the commitment of the local superintendent for the involvement of people on his staff, you will not get anywhere. The superintendent is the key to citizen involvement."

There is the problem of how the entire educational establishment can be made aware of the potential of positive citizen involvement. One participant declared, "I honestly think that many school administrators are nonreaders. A lot of good and valuable information is available in the professional literature, but one is hard put to find a great deal of evident impact from this wealth of information."

How does one get organizational commitment to something called citizen involvement? While resources of individuals are extremely important, it is the institutional agreement for a collaborative effort between

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educators and businessmen that will affect the lives of many youngsters." From my experience, I would say that if you do not have the commitment of the local superintendent for the involvement of people on his staff, you will not get anywhere. The superintendent is the key to citizen involvement."

The group unanimously agreed that when speaking of citizen involvement, "You are talking about nothing unless you are talking about specifics!" By specifics, they were talking of results. Every time someone serves on a committee, and he does not know what happens to the recommendations or he does not see any change as a result of his efforts, then he becomes very frustrated whether he is a parent, businessman, or college professor. If that frustration is encountered on more than one occasion, how can educators expect the public to support them either spiritually or financially?

Committees seem to be an excellent method for neutralizing criticism that the public officials are not listening to their constituents. "A superintendent cannot bring an advisory group of local businessmen together for the sole purpose of putting a rubber stamp of approval on next year's school budget!" a businessman emphasized.

Many times the community proper already possesses the solutions to its problems. "It is high time that we get down to earth and start doing something about what we already know how to do," a businessman maintained. "We have opportunities for youngsters to explore careers and open up the world, but we do not do much about it. Opportunities abound for work experience. They merely need school district sanctioning and coordination. Tutoring programs are available or can easily be established through our educational auxiliaries and volunteer organizations. The problem is that, in general, neither educational administrators, businessmen, nor community leaders have responded in the depth needed to make a meaningful difference in the lives of enough students."

NONTHREATENING INTERVENTION VIA SCHOOL VOLUNTEERS

Statistically speaking, the average volunteer in the United States is a well-educated, middle-aged, white woman who does volunteer work a few times a year. This was the finding of a U. S. Department of Labor survey conducted in 1965. It found a little over 10% of the population engaged in volunteer activities. Unfortunately, this says nothing about the potential or current change in attitude about the role of volunteers in the classroom.

School volunteers bring a new dimension to institutionalized education through their enthusiasm, warm understanding, generosity, and willingness to help wherever they are needed. However, without a positive attitude, encouragement, and permission of school officials and teachers, these volunteers evaporate like water.

"What I have noticed is that volunteers are often viewed as 'non-people people,'" an experienced volunteer worker observed. "They are not seen by teachers as educated people or as people with certain personalities who possess certain kinds of skills." Responding to this accusation, another discussant declared, "Volunteers purposely become non-people because they know that the only way they are going to get into the schools is through nonthreatening intervention!"

An all too consistent misuse of volunteers has been to serve the school's purposes and to do only what it says needs to be done. Generally, this shortsighted approach is demeaning and is seen readily in the program's low level of impact within the school system. "I think there are different types of volunteers," a discussant observed. "When a school board has the authority to screen out and to bring in an innocuous group of people who are fund raisers for the school, it is a travesty and an insult to people's intelligence." When citizens are involved, they must feel useful, as well as be useful to the administrator.

An experienced volunteer worker took the position that the way to overcome the schools' self-serving attitude is to set up a volunteer talent pool. A list of the skills available from the pool is prepared and made available to the schools as well as to business and civic organizations. Program chairmen, school principals, or company officers in the surrounding vicinity can call the pool headquarters requesting whatever talent they require on a short-term basis. The talent pool acts as a buffer insulating the schools and their organizations from the possibility of unwanted intervention.

One problem with volunteer groups is that if someone comes into the fold who has a skill, he will usually terminate his affiliation when his child graduates out of that school. If a group is developed that involves a broader range of the community, then those skills and talents can be tapped continuously by all the schools in the area. Many people and groups have collections, talents, experiences, hobbies, and contacts with cultural, business, and industrial organizations which they are willing to share with students.

When recruiting is done by central community pools, more volunteers are accessible and requests can be filled more effectively. Usually, the board of the volunteer pool has representatives from all community organizations including the school boards and parent-teacher groups. These participants in turn have access to their parent groups and communicate recruiting needs and pool accomplishments to them. Some of the pools operate on a completely volunteer basis. Others have small operating costs met by private groups, public fund raising, local community chests, the school board or some combination of these resources.

Basically, there are two requirements of schools wishing to utilize the services of volunteer pools. First, the school administrator must be convinced of the validity of the service and be supportive of it. Second, in order to have effective utilization of volunteers, an individual who may be a paid staff member or a trained community volunteer must be responsible to the principal and coordinate the volunteer program for the school.

"I try to identify the human resources that are available in every community for the implementation and improvement of our schools' educational program," a volunteer coordinator told the group. Some 20 companies in the Philadelphia area are giving release time to over 400 employees to come into that city's schools to work with the youngsters in a variety of capacities but mainly as tutors in a one-to-one situation.

Not all volunteers need to possess artistic skills or outstanding knowledge. In Elmont, New York, "teacher-moms" are helping rehabilitate emotionally disturbed children in the school setting under the supervision of a psychiatrist-and-teacher team. In a Chicago school, a principal assigns children from fatherless homes where the mother works to "aunties" who come to school several times a week to show loving interest in the children assigned to them and oversee their learning.

Citizens who are happy and successful in their work or hobbies should have an opportunity to share their expertise with students

BUSINESSMEN AND INDUSTRIALISTS IN EDUCATION — THE FRIENDLY GIANTS

in the classroom. The reason for such citizen involvement is twofold. First, including citizens in the school's curriculum increases considerably the educational alternatives available to the young learner. Second, involving these adult taxpayers in an everyday fashion in the school helps open communication between the home and the school.

The group consensus appeared to be that educational programs left totally in the hands of educators can isolate children from the richness and reality of the world outside of the classroom. However, parents are not likely to be involved in programs when their life conditions demand that time and energy be primarily focused on meeting noneducation needs such as adequate housing, clothing, and food. In order for fully employed parents to become involved, incentives must be built into the programs that allow them to participate, if they so desire, without excessive loss of time and energy.

A difficult and arduous process is the recruitment and continued involvement of citizens. Staff persistence and commitment are the crucial qualities for success. It appears that when parents feel genuinely involved and have a self-determined part in ongoing activities, they are likely to continue to participate and to initiate activities.

Too often, the graduating high-school student has received an education that neither provided him with proper career preparation nor with the desire to obtain it. In an effort to take up the slack, industry has been obliged to offer supplemental education at a substantial cost to itself which has to be passed on to consumers in the form of higher prices for the goods produced.

Business executives in charge of employment find themselves increasingly involved in remedial training of incoming employees. As a result, many have decided that if they stay on this path, they will be chasing their tails forever. This has led to their

Unfortunately, the majority of present cooperative activities are small in scope, affect few children, begin in a flurry of news releases and public proclamations, and end in an eddy of official unconcern.

We recognized from the beginning of this particular program that the educational community should provide some of the financial support because if you put something into a program you will get more out of it.

PRODUCING BETTER BAKERS AND CANDLESTICK MAKERS

Approximately 89% of the over 80 million people gainfully employed in the United States work in occupations that do not require a college degree. Yet public education seems bent on preparing the majority of its students for college. Education and business are interrelated and any isolation of the schools can lead only to misunderstanding, conflicts, and delays in making the educational community the progressive force it must be. A discussion of vocational education evoked strong opinions from the group on the role of business in training students.

"If we are ever going to have career education, industry is going to have to play a bigger role." This individual declared vocational education to be less than adequate and he held industry responsible for the condition. "The schools have been fooling around with performance contracting in which they contract reading out of the schools. They have no business doing this because reading belongs to the schools, but they ought to be contracting all of their vocational work out of the schools. The schools should not have a single vocational shop on the premises.

"A school system will spend $100,000 to put up an auto mechanics shop to train students

to be auto mechanics, in the surrounding community there will be 15 better auto shops already in successful operation whose equipment is kept up to date regularly because their business is so competitive. But the school will hire one of the local mechanics to be the teacher in their shop and try to simulate the community conditions."

A variation of this type of training was started by Michigan Consolidated Gas Company in 1968. The program required students to work two mornings or two afternoons each week at a variety of office jobs in the company for which they were paid an hourly wage as well as receiving course credit toward graduation. The only requirements for student participation in the program were that the student be between 16 and 18 years of age and that he have passing grades. At the end of the first year of operation, 85% of the 80 students in the program reportedly applied for college or trade school.

"If the school people would stop wasting their money duplicating facilities that already exist in the community and use performance contracting for vocational work, they could offer occupational opportunities for the students widely ranging from watch repairing to aircraft maintenance," this participant insisted. "At the same time, the school system would not pay for the student's training until he was performing satisfactorily." This is an area where industry can get involved and make a meaningful and profitable contribution. At the same time, they are preparing a ready pool of future employees, properly trained, but at little or no cost to the company. The financial benefits are substantial for the school and for business.

A business-man agreed with the accusation citing his company's experience. "For a number of years we have been saying that the technical schools are not giving us people with the skills that we want. They are turning out lousy welders, horrible solderers, the worst draftsmen in the world, and awful bakers — if my company's cafeteria is any example. So we have set up our own training centers. Then we hire and train the student right out of high school."

Another discussant took the exchange beyond vocational education. "If high schools were run properly today, every student would have an opportunity for a work experience, not vocational training, but working out of school and getting credit for it."

This contention was challenged by an educator. "It seems in all [illegible] consciousness of industry to education and vice versa, one of the groups being left out is the parents. There is no reason to assume that parents know what is meant by work exploratory programs or other education. The parents must be informed of what is occurring in the school in any school-industry involvement. Otherwise, they are going to come down hard on the school when their child reports that he was at a local business establishment rather than studying reading and arithmetic."

This observation received further endorsement from a business representative. "When you get involved with business, you are going to get into self-serving. This means involvement in junior and senior high schools where the students are closest to entering the labor force. They are not going to get involved in the preschool, kindergarten, or elementary grades in any meaningful way where the learning problems begin. The level at which we have so many mental casualties occurs before the students even get to junior high."

While the images that businessmen and educators have formed of each other based on past failures are not without validity, it does seem essential that someone

be willing to meet. In one program discussed at the seminar, businessmen have assumed that willingness by trying to open up the whole notion of matching needs against resources. "The components of this program purposely have been kept few because if we put too much merchandise on the shelf, everybody gets it confused."

All young people in the process of going through the educational system really should have an opportunity to find out what is out there in those factories where their parents work. Businessmen have done a magnificent job of surrounding themselves with brick and marble facades, chain link fences, and armed guards. National defense has complicated the matter even more. "You do not just drop in at the bank to see what is going on there, so we are trying to use an existing program — work experience education — that has a phase in it for exploratory work experience. But far too few students are taking advantage of this opportunity, and those who are in the program are in their senior year of school. This is too late."

An annual career conference for high-school freshmen is held in Minneapolis, Minnesota, to explore job opportunities as a guide toward career planning. The program was designed to supplement the present career information activities available to junior high-school students. Over 8,000 students are bused to a city auditorium where area firms and organizations demonstrate and explain to students the skills they need to acquire to prepare themselves for various positions. This program gives students an opportunity to talk to persons in a variety of occupations; shows students the job opportunities that exist and the training required; and achieves a high degree of cooperation among the community's organizations, industries, and schools with regard to occupational data and guidance.

The question was raised as to labor-union barriers that prohibit a student from working in a particular industry. "We must develop some kind of arrangement whereby these young people pay only a percentage of normal dues. The student who is paid $20 a week to do something should not have to pay the same dues to the union as the man getting $150 a week." This participant was optimistic that ways could be found for overcoming some of these traditional barriers. "We are talking with some of the union people on a statewide basis. I detect that the unions are beginning to feel just as much threatened as the educator, the businessman, and the people in government."

The basic arguments of business and education are quite simple. Industry is saying that the young people hired from the public schools are inadequate for immediate use and require supplemental education to train them before placement in a profitable position in industry. On the other hand, the school is saying that it is doing the best it can with what it has and blames industry for only throwing stones. Both are going down the same road for the benefit of the child, but seem incapable of coming into a closer parallel toward what are similar goals.

Industry is saying that the young people hired from the public schools are inadequate for immediate use and require supplemental education to train them before placement in a profitable position in industry.

GETTING TO CAUSES BY TREATING SYMPTOMS

The trend in citizen involvement programs is a moving from passive roles, where parents are recipients of aid and information, to more active participative roles. This trend probably is a function of the increasing awareness and experience of social workers that informational dissemination and attitude-change oriented programs have dubious impact on the populace unless they include the active and direct involvement of citizens served by the programs.

An educator experienced in the subject contended that participative democracy does work, but people have to be convinced of this fact to get them involved or it will not work. He has been engineering and developing a set of procedures for helping community leaders gain skills in identifying their priority educational problems, searching for alternative solutions, building a long-range plan of school improvements, implementing the plan, and evaluating it themselves as it progresses. "It is a grass-roots testing of the basic tenets of democracy. It is involving people in the decisions about their schools that affect them by establishing a communication mechanism to deal with their feelings, ideas, and interests in school improvements. It

TAKING LESSONS FROM AN UNDERDEVELOPED COUNTRY AND A FEW GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

emphasizes learning new skills of decision making, problem solving, and communication."

One of his program's tenets is treating the school-community as a learning system. "One of the basic doctrines of education is that you start where the child is and take him from that point. The same thing is true of the community as a learning system. If you will start where the community is and deal with its problems as perceived by its leaders, you can move forward from that point."

In order to start where people are in using the community as a learning system, the problems as perceived by the community must be identified, according to the speaker. The way to do this is to interview the people and discover what they do or do not like about their schools and what steps they would like to take to improve the schools. With the answers to these questions, a program can be developed.

This technique is based on the use of an outside "change agent" who facilitates the community leaders' learning of new processes to deal with their problems. A good salesman knows that he makes a friend first, and then he makes a sale. The same thing is true of the change agent. "We have to work on what educators call symptoms before we can ever get to causes."

Recognition surely will come in the United States that expenditures for citizen involvement programs purchase what money usually cannot buy — citizen awareness, citizen concern, neighborly know-how, and the personal caring that so rarely occurs in professionalism.

One of the finest examples of citizen involvement in education occurred in Iran when that country's Imperial Majesty Shahanshah conceived the idea of using the young, educated men from the cities who had been drafted for military duty to serve their fellow countrymen as teachers. By proclamation he formed the Literacy Corps. These young people developed such a dedication toward their work that many asked to stay on their jobs after the expiration of their military obligation.

Recognition surely will come in the United States that expenditures for citizen involvement programs purchase what money usually cannot buy — citizen awareness, citizen concern, neighborly know-how, and the personal caring that so rarely occurs in professionalism. One need only look at Peace Corps, VISTA, Teacher Corps, and other HEW programs to see that money, even federal government money and bureaucracy, does not degrade the nature of the service performed or distort the ethic of involvement. However, it is imperative that money not be used to seduce or to coerce people to do such work. Rather, it must be used to facilitate programs of citizen involvement in the schools.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Every school central office should appoint a community involvement coordinator to work with business and citizen groups in areas of mutual concern.

2. Every school should initiate a program for utilizing community volunteers in the school.

3. Local public opinion polls such as the one developed by Gallup International for CFK Ltd., a Denver-based Foundation, should be utilized in a continuing program to aid the school board in policy making and communication.

4. Vocational programs should explore the use of performance contracting with local businesses to teach students useful skills before graduation.

5. Involvement with the community by local educational authorities must be conscientious, constructive, and continuing if it is to have more than news article impact.

6. Every effort should be made to convince the local parent-school group to reassess its responsibilities to school and community. Parent participation must be solicited and encouraged in all facets of school activities including finance, curriculum, innovation, and standardization of terminology.

7. School administrators at all levels are the gatekeepers to meaningful community involvement. They should roll out the "welcome mat" and seek business and citizen participation in the school.

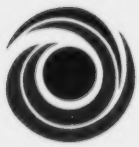
8. Quick, positive response to citizen recommendations and requests should be standard operating procedure for school administrators. Rejection and confrontation are better than side-stepping the issue.

9. Educators should refrain from using unfamiliar terms and jargon of the profession in talking with parents and community citizens.

10. Any citizen involvement program must deal initially with educational problems as perceived by the local community. Later it can be expanded to more basic subjects as mutual trust develops between educators and citizen groups.

11. In order to respond fully to the community's needs, school administrators need more than a cursory acquaintance with the local social and political climate. It goes far beyond participation in prominent civic clubs.

*At its 1972 national convention, the Parent-Teacher Association passed a resolution to drop a long-standing policy that the PTA ". . . will not interfere with administration of the schools and shall not ask to control their policies." The new PTA statement says the group ". . . *shall seek to participate in the decision-making processes establishing school policy.*"



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